

Message Text

UNCLASSIFIED

PAGE 01 MERIDA 00025 291655Z

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SUBJ: CONSULAR AGENT FOR CANCUN, QUINTANA ROO

REF: STATE 017931, MERIDA 0019

1. BACKGROUND: CANCUN IS THE LARGEST TOURIST COMPLEX EVER TO BE DEVELOPED BY THE MEXICAN GOVERNMENT. IT WAS PLANNED AND ITS DEVELOPMENT IS DIRECTED BY THE NATIONAL TRUST FOR TOURISM DEVELOPMENT (FONATUR). IT IS ON THE NORTHEAST COAST OF THE YUCATAN PENINSULA ON A SMALL ISLAND THAT PROJECTS OUT INTO THE CARIBBEAN. APPROXIMATELY TEN MILES OF BEACH ON THIS ISLAND ARE BEING DEVELOPED WITH SOME TEN OR 12 SUPER LUXURY HOTELS AND A LARGE NUMBER OF CONDOMINIUM BEACH HOUSES. A CONVENTION CENTER AND SHOPPING MALL AND SUPER GOLF COURSE ARE UNDER CONSTRUCTION. A NEW CITY OF APPROXIMATELY 20,000 HAS BEEN ESTABLISHED ON THE MAINLAND TO SUPPORT THE COMPLEX. ALL OF THIS HAS BEEN CREATED OVER THE PAST FOUR YEARS OUT OF A COMPLETE WILDERNESS FRONTIER AREA. ADVERTISING HAS BEEN EXTENSIVE AND IN THE VERY BEST MADISON AVENUE STYLE. FULL PAGE ADS WILL BE FOUND IN MAJOR NEWSPAPERS AND NATIONAL MAGAZINES IN THE U.S. MAJOR AIRLINES ARE COMPETING FOR ROUTES TO CANCUN'S NEW JET-PORT.

2. HOWEVER, SERVICES ARE NOT YET ADEQUATE. ALTHOUGH UHF TELECOMMUNICATIONS HAVE BEEN INSTALLED, VERY FEW TRUNKS AND SUBSCRIBER LINES ARE AVAILABLE MAKING IT ALMOST IMPOSSIBLE TO REACH MOST HOTELS BY TELEPHONE. IN ADDITION, THERE IS NO PHONE SERVICE BETWEEN THE RESORT AREA AND THE TOWN OF CANCUN ITSELF FROM WHERE POLICE, MEDICAL AND OTHER SERVICES MUST BE OBTAINED.

UNCLASSIFIED

UNCLASSIFIED

PAGE 02 MERIDA 00025 291655Z

CURRENTLY NO ADEQUATE MEDICAL SERVICES EXIST TO SUPPORT THE

TOURIST POPULATION OF FIVE TO TEN THOUSAND. HOTELS AND THE ONE MORTUARY ARE NOT PREPARED TO HANDLE DEATHS AND SHIPMENT OF REMAINS. CONSTRUCTION IS STILL A HAZARD AND INCONVENIENT TO TOURISTS. NO FACILITIES EXIST TO HANDLE CLAIMS FOR LOST TRAVELERS CHECKS AND AIRLINE TICKETS. THEREFORE, EVERY SMALL PROBLEM ENCOUNTERED BY TOURISTS BECOMES A MAJOR ONE. SINCE THE SURROUNDING AREA IS AN UNINHABITED WILDERNESS, NO SUPPORTING FACILITATIVE SERVICES ARE AVAILABLE.

3. THE CONSULATE BELIEVES A CONSULAR AGENT WOULD BE PARTICULARLY USEFUL DURING THIS TIME OF DEVELOPMENT OF CANCUN. IT IS NOW THAT ASSISTANCE IS REQUIRED TO IRON OUT PROBLEMS AND PROVIDE ASSISTANCE WHILE FACILITATIVE SERVICES ARE WEAK AND IN THE PROCESS OF FORMATION.

4. EXAMPLES OF SERIOUS PROBLEMS ENCOUNTERED:

A) DEATH BY DROWNING OF USCIT ARCHIBALD R. STEVENSON ON 12/29/75 IN FRONT OF HOTEL ARISTOS AND NEAR DROWNING OF SEVERAL OTHER USCITS AT SAME PLACE AND DATE. HOTEL HAS PROVIDED NO LIFE GUARD NOR ANY WARNING OF DANGEROUS WATERS IN THIS LOCALE. THE CONSULATE HAS CHECKED WITH AMERICAN DIVERS FAMILIAR WITH THESE WATERS AND THEY REPORT THIS SPOT IS VERY DANGEROUS AND UNWISE FOR HOTEL TO PERMIT UNSUPERVISED BATHING THERE. CONSULATE PROTESTING TO FONATUR OFFICE AT CANCUN.

B) SERIOUS INJURY TO USCITS MR AND MRS DONALD MCKIBBIN ON 9/5/75. WHILE PARKED IN A RENTAL CAR, THEY WERE HIT BY A CONSTRUCTION TRUCK. BOTH SUFFERED SERIOUS INJURY AND HAD TO PAY FOR ALL THEIR MEDICAL ATTENTION PLUS SIX FIRST CLASS AIR FARES TO BE EVACUATED. INSPITE OF PROTESTS TO LOCAL FONATUR OFFICE, NO RESPONSIBILITY FOR THESE INJURIES HAS EVER BEEN ACKNOWLEDGED. THE CASE NOW IS IN THE HANDS OF A U.S. ATTORNEY. APPARENTLY FONATUR HAS MADE NO PLANS FOR PROVIDING FOR LIABILITY INSURANCE AGAINST INJURY TO TOURISTS. THIS SEEMS TO BE RATHER POOR PLANNING INASMUCH AS THERE STILL IS SO MUCH CONSTRUCTION UNDERWAY.

UNCLASSIFIED

UNCLASSIFIED

PAGE 03 MERIDA 00025 291655Z

C) VICTOR LEVY, USCIT, ON 1/9/76, WAS SUBJECT TO UNNECESSARY HARRASSMENT BY LOCAL IMMIGRATION OFFICIALS AND HAD TO PAY A QTE FINE UNQTE OF 20.00 IN ORDER NOT TO MISS HIS FLIGHT. OTHER INSTANCES OF THIS NATURE ARE ALLEGED, BUT NOT DOCUMENTED.

D) SEVERAL REPORTS HAVE BEEN RECEIVED THAT UNESCORTED WOMEN RECEIVE LATE NIGHT OBSCENE TELEPHONE CALLS. SINCE

FEW OUTSIDE LINES EXIST IT WOULD APPEAR THESE SHOULD
BE CONTROLLED BY THE VARIOUS HOTEL MANAGEMENTS.

E) MEXICAN OFFICIALS REPORTEDLY HAVE CONFISCATED 16MM
MOTION PICTURE FILM, CLAIMING TOURISTS COULDN'T USE
THIS SIZE. PESOS USUALLY SOLVED THE PROBLEM.

F) IN ONE DEATH CASE, THE BODY WAS RETURNED TO THE USA
WITHOUT ANY CONSULAR DOCUMENTS WHATSOEVER. THIS CREATED
BIG PROBLEMS FOR NOK AND UNNECESSARY WORK FOR ALL CON-
CERNED. CURRENTLY HOTEL PERSONNEL BRING DEATH CERTIFI-
CATES AND OTHER DOCUMENTS TO CONSULATE. BECAUSE OF ER-
RATIC AIRLINE SCHEDULES, PRIVATE PLANES ARE BEING RENT-
ED TO MOVE DOCUMENTS BETWEEN CANCUN AND MERIDA.

G) DURING HEAVY CHRISTMAS AND NEW YEARS SEASON THE CONSU-
LATE RECEIVED NUMEROUS REQUESTS FOR ASSISTANCE FROM
TOURISTS WHO MANAGED TO GET WORD TO US FROM CANCUN.
UNFORTUNATELY, BECAUSE OF POOR COMMUNICATIONS WE HAD
DIFFICULTY PROVIDING ASSISTANCE. NUMEROUS WHEREABOUTS
CALLS ALSO WERE RECEIVED FROM THE STATES REGARDING
TOURISTS IN THE CANCUN AREA. LIKEWISE THESE WERE ALMOST
IMPOSSIBLE TO SERVICE.

5. GIVEN HEAVY EMPHASIS GOM IS GIVING THIS PROJECT AND HARD
SELL TECHNIQUES TO ATTRACT TOURISTS, CONSULATE BELIEVES
SITUATION WILL WORSEN BEFORE FACILITATIVE SERVICES AND
RESPONSIBLE REACTION BY HOTELS AND FONATUR CATCH UP WITH
THE TRADE. FOR THIS REASON, CONSULATE RECOMMENDS CONSULAR
AGENT FOR CANCUN BE INCLUDED IN FIRST GROUP OF THOSE TO
BE APPOINTED IN MEXICO.

6. CONSULATE IS PLANNING A ONE DAY ROUND TABLE IN MARCH 1976
UNCLASSIFIED

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PAGE 04 MERIDA 00025 291655Z

TO DISCUSS THESE AND OTHER PROBLEMS WITH TOURIST AGENTS,
HOTELS, FONATUR, AIRLINES AND MORTUARIES. ASHFORD

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